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ASSISTANT SECRETARY

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
DEC 13 1956
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TO : G - Mr. Murphy
FROM : MR - William M. Rountree
SUBJECT: Talks with UK on Libyan Military Program

December 13, 1956

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Discussion:

1. In March we undertook to supply equipment for 1000 men for the Libyan Army. A Joint Military Survey team was subsequently sent to Libya to work out a proposed program and to make recommendations regarding organization, training and equipment.

2. The major responsibility for the training and equipping of the Libyan Army has hitherto been in the hands of the British who are presently considering Libyan requests for British assistance in expanding their ground forces from approximately 1500 to 5000 men. (We are not clear whether the latter figure is intended to include the U.S. commitment regarding the 1000 men.)

3. Both State and Defense have long recognized the desirability of talks with the British in order to coordinate our respective undertakings and responsibilities regarding the Libyan Army. The Embassy at Tripoli has particularly urged such talks be undertaken in order to ascertain UK plans and intentions before decisions were taken in the U.S. Government on such matters as whether we would supply British equipment OSP and utilize the British Training Mission in implementing our MDAP commitment to Libya.

4. The 1957 MDAP program for Libya, in common with those for other countries, is now at the point of approval and there is great urgency from a political point of view of proceeding to implement it with all possible speed. (The Libyans have been highly critical of our slowness in carrying out the program and we have reports of a Soviet offer to build a 10,000 man Libyan Army. Further protracted delays could result in a situation the Soviets and/or Egyptians could readily exploit.)

5. On December 4, the JCS considered the questions of the implementation of the Libyan program and of future responsibilities with

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REVIEWED BY *G. M. Razi*

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May 6, 1962

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respect to the Libyan Army. Their findings and recommendations may be summarized as follows:

A. The establishment of a Military Assistance Program for Libya with divided training and advisory responsibilities between the U.S. and UK is unsound from a military point of view.

B. An early agreement should be reached with the UK providing for U.S. equipment and training for the 1000 men and for the progressive assumption by the U.S. of all UK responsibilities for equipping and training the Libyan Army.

6. NEA believes that Point A. above is a legitimate military judgment which we should take into account. Although we are not familiar with the JCS reasoning on Point B., it would appear to involve a political judgment that the British are either incapable of or unwilling to discharge their responsibilities. We believe that such a judgment can only be made after we have talked to the British, ascertained their intentions with respect to their Libyan responsibilities, and made our assessment of their capability for carrying them out. We would then have to consider our conclusions on the Libyan aspect of the problem in the light of its effect on the Anglo-American relationship, the general situation in the area and our own capabilities for assuming the UK responsibilities, including the long-range MDAP implications.

7. I am convinced that we have now reached the point where we can no longer afford to delay implementing a commitment which we undertook nine months ago and believe we must therefore take an immediate decision to utilize U.S. equipment and training, thereby discarding any idea of employing OSP and British training facilities, for the 1000 men.

Recommendations:

1. That you ask Gordon Gray to call for a discussion of these matters and make the following points:

A. From a political point of view, we must proceed urgently to implement our commitment to the Libyans.

B. We should therefore proceed as a matter of highest priority to procure and deliver U.S. equipment and furnish U.S. training for the 1000 man component of the Libyan Army to which we are committed, rather than to defer such action until after talks with the UK, as would be involved in the JCS recommendations.

C. We

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C. We recognize that this course of action will create a situation of divided US-UK responsibility for the Libyan Army which it will be desirable to discuss with the UK. We should therefore as soon as practicable undertake talks with the UK looking towards the longer range problems of the Libyan Armed Forces, including the situation created by divided responsibility.

D. For the reasons set forth in Paragraph 6 under "Discussion", we cannot agree at this time that the talks with the UK should have as their objective the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs that the U.S. progressively assume full responsibility for the Libyan Army. Instead, the talks should comprise a general exchange of views on the situation in Libya and the plans and programs of the two countries to meet the situation, with particular emphasis on the military problems. (In this connection, I think the talks must give attention to the possibility of Air Force assistance if the political situation in Libya should require it, despite the JCS views that there is no military requirement for a Libyan air capability.) After we have talked to the British, we can then decide what position we wish to take on the long-range aspects of these problems, e.g. whether we should take over entire responsibility for the Libyan Army or continue the situation which will then exist, of divided responsibility.

2. That you request Mr. Gray's concurrence in the attached telegram reflecting the foregoing.

Attachment:

Suggested telegram.

Concurrences:

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U/MSA - *LD*

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NEA:JPalmer:ehd

12/11/56

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